Freedom Watch™

Citizens Project

"Mandatory 10 Commandments?"

by Doug Triggs

"At last, "charged the October 8, 1998 *Gazette* op-ed headline, "a law in defense of God's word." With that, Gary Bauer and Ed Meese launched their arguments in favor of the Ten Commandments Defense Act. Bauer and Meese want Congress to pass this law so the Ten Commandments can be posted on public school walls and in governmental offices.

Passing this law, they say, would allow "public institutions to give due recognition to God and God's Commandments," and permit "individuals to express religious faith on government-owned property."

Gary Bauer is the much-quoted head of Family Research Council, formerly part of Focus on the Family. Edwin Meese was U.S. Attorney General under President Reagan.

The Argument

In support of this legislation, Bauer and Meese harken back to Jefferson's Declaration of Independence, which included the phrase, "the laws of nature's God," and the fact that Congress proclaimed 1983 "the year of the Bible."

If Jefferson can write about a God and Congress can endorse the Bible, Bauer and Meese argue, why can't public institutions promote the Ten Commandments? Here's their answer: unelected judges, who simply don't understand the Constitution rule against it.

By passing the Ten Commandments Act, Congress can show those judges that the founding fathers really wanted government-supported religion.

Majority Rule and Individual Rights

Even as traditional conservatives push for smaller government, today's "social conservatives" find that nothing plays better to constituents than laws to promote God.

While acknowledging the Ten Commandments Act supports God, Bauer and Meese say it wouldn't advance any particular religion because "Christians, Muslims, and Jews all honor the Ten Commandments." And should this ever become an issue, they argue, people can decide by voting. They caution, however, that majority rule must still insure that "others' rights are not violated."

This majority rule approach to religion raises a number of questions.

For example, if a majority wants the Ten Commandments in public schools, would that violate the rights of persons who are not "Christians, Muslims, or Jews?"

Would using a particular version of the Ten Commandments violate the rights of those whose faith preaches a different version? Would public schools post the Protestant wording, the Catholic wording, or perhaps even the Jewish wording (in Hebrew) of the Ten Commandments?

Beyond "rights," will people be highly offended if their children are forced to study under the stirring words of another religion?

In Colorado Springs, where people take religion seriously, these are practical and important questions. Yet they are nowhere addressed in the Bauer-Meese article.

> ***"Congressman Aderholt's bold legislation tests whether the clear will of our citizens can be paralyzed by unelected judges who, while invoking the Constitution, systematically deny the basic constitutional right of self-government."***
>
> – Excerpt from Oct. 8 Gazette article "At Last, a Law in Defense of God's Word"

In the Real World

One need not go far in geography or history to see the results when governments grant "special rights" to certain religions. These include sectarian strife in Northern Ireland, past battles between Catholics and Protestants in Chicago, and the outrage of Protestants in Central America where schools favor Catholics, to name just a few.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see that the proposed Ten Commandments Act, by forcing our government to choose among religions, would move us toward a new era of religious intolerance and strife. Our country is unique because families and churches are free to pass on their faiths without government interference. We don't need the unnecessary problems of this new legislation. CP

Citizens Project
P.O. Box 2085
Colorado Springs, CO 80901

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Colo. Spgs., CO
Permit No. 463

CFV Threatens to Go National with Ordinance

by Megan Day

Colorado for Family Values (CFV) responded to the Supreme Court's recent decision not to hear a Cincinnati anti-gay ordinance case with a promise to take their show on the road.

Cincinnati's City Council adopted a human rights ordinance in 1992 which prohibited discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodations based on race, sex, religion, disability, Appalachian origin, or sexual orientation. In response to the Council's action, CFV promptly funneled $390,000 (77% of the entire campaign budget) toward a counter ordinance. The counter ordinance, which prevents gays and lesbians from gaining any protections from discrimination, qualified for the city's ballot.

> ***CFV sees the Court's decision regarding Cincinnati as a green light to push similar ordinances in cities across the country. And the test case will be right here in Colorado Springs.***

Following a campaign that mirrored Amendment 2 tactics (including the deceptive "equal rights not special rights" slogan) and an inexperienced and barely funded campaign against the ordinance, a majority of Cincinnati residents voted the ordinance into law. Challenges to the ordinance were struck down by lower courts. When it reached the Supreme Court, their refusal to hear the case let the ordinance stand.

CFV sees the Court's decision regarding Cincinnati as a green light to push similar ordinances in cities across the country. And the test case will be right here in Colorado Springs.

CFV started the push for a Colorado Springs city ordinance in reaction to the City Council's unanimous approval of a non-discrimination policy for city employees. In their own words, CFV boasts their ordinance would "nullify a zero tolerance in discrimination resolution passed by the council last year." If CFV turns in the required 11,085 valid signatures by the December14 deadline, City Council will either write it into law or refer it to the April municipal election ballot. Given Council's unanimous approval of the Zero Tolerance for Discrimination resolution that this ordinance would overturn, and CFV's failure to secure a second to support Dawson Hubert's proposal to change the resolution, they will most likely choose the latter.

If Colorado Springs voters go along with CFV's ordinance in April, we will have provided a springboard for similar ordinances in cities throughout the country.

As the Fall 1998 CFV newsletter states, " ... this ordinance has relevance far beyond Colorado Springs. If successful, this can become a model for protecting any other community from this particular 'stealth' tactic [referring to Council's approval of a non-discrimination policy for city employees...]."

CFV is still gathering signatures for their petition and asking for volunteers. Beware petitioners who ask you to sign a "human rights ordinance" or an ordinance to prevent "special rights." Their proposal is nothing but an attempt to undermine our city's stance against discrimination. CP

A Crime Against Humanity

by Hugh B. Price – President, National Urban League

Matthew Shepard, an undergraduate at the University of Wyoming in Laramie, was different.

For one thing, although born in Wyoming, he had lived abroad with his parents and spoke Arabic and German.

But that's not what made him "different" to the men who brutally tortured and murdered him.

What made him different to them was that he was gay – moreover, he was a homosexual who refused to conceal his sexual identity.

To his killers, both those facts made him a target for their twisted, venomous rage. They lured him outside a campus-area bar, kidnapped him, and drove him to an isolated rural location. There they pistol-whipped him, fracturing his skull, and tied him to a fence, where he hung for 18 hours before a passer-by found him and called the police.

Matthew Shepard was slain not because his killers wanted to rob him. He died because they wanted to punish him for being a homosexual.

He was slain because he was different, and his difference made all the difference to his murderers.

It enabled them to declare *him not human, and, therefore*, to act as men without scruples, without a shred of decency to their tattered souls; as savages. By declaring Matthew Shepard not human, his killers could slip out of their own humanity in order to act out their murderous rage.

This is the essence of the lynching frenzy. It is essential to the commission of crimes against humanity.

African Americans are well acquainted with this kind of horrific behavior – murder motivated by a bigotry that often includes a strong element of a perverse psychosexual desire.

It was the foundation of the base practice of lynching, which took the lives of so many black men, women, and children down through the centuries of America's existence, leaving a bloody stain that has yet to fade.

Lynching was not just a murderous way to impose and maintain an oppressive social control over the lives of black people. It was an act of exorcism, a compulsive attempt on the part of the lynchers to let loose the demons that were haunting them.

But, unfortunately, one need not recall the reign of terror African Americans endured in the American South, or the near-destruction of Native American peoples in the American West, or the Nazis' attempt to destroy European Jewry during the 1930s and 1940s, to find the unbearably sad comparisons to this crime.

There is "enough material" we can draw on from the present: from such foreign territory as Rwanda; from Indonesia, where ethnic Chinese Indonesians suffered terribly during that country's recent upheavals; from Kosovo and other "killing fields" in the Balkans; and from here in America, with the so-called "skinhead murders" in Denver and the awful murder of James Byrd Jr., an African American, in Jasper, Texas last June [Byrd was dragged behind a car to his death by white supremacists.] These examples showed – again – that these kind of depraved human beings exist everywhere.

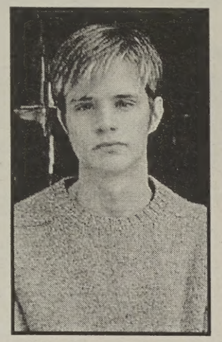
Two men have been arrested and charged with Matthew Shepard's murder. If they are guilty, then by their actions they have forfeited their right to ever again be free.

Their imprisonment, no matter how deserved, will not restore the life of this young man.

But the larger community of human beings does have a responsibility to take action beyond punishing those who committed this evil deed.

The Congress should, as President Clinton has said, amend the current federal law against hate crimes to make Federal offenses of crimes based on sex, disability, and sexual orientation, as well as race, color, religion, and national origin. And the Wyoming state legislature should join the 21 states which also have such laws on their books.

Hate-crime laws do not give some groups "special rights," nor do they curtail freedom of thought or speech.



Matthew Shepard

They do penalize actions that spring from a particular attitude. They do warn bigots that society has declared that crimes motivated by prejudice are unacceptable and will bring a punishment tailored to the crime.

Beyond that, we in the larger American community must work to make the ties of tolerance among us stronger.

For how to do that, perhaps we can look to Jasper, Texas, the town where James Byrd Jr. was slain.

At the time the world's spotlight focused on them, its citizens said that heinous act did not represent life there.

Well, now, according to a recent *Wall Street Journal* story, they're proving it. In large ways and small, Jasper's citizens are grappling with its racial past and, more importantly, its present and future. They're trying to close the distance that *difference* has created among them.

In doing so, they invite us to move beyond the mere – and often empty – expression of tolerance to an honest acceptance that others who are different have as much right to inhabit the earth as we do.

Committing ourselves to that goal will enable us to make sense out of the senseless death of Matthew Shepard. CP

The Power of Public Piety

A book review by Rebekah Shardy

Living in Colorado Springs, home to dozens of evangelical groups, it's easy to turn a blind eye to the Christian Right, since its presence here is as startling as coffee shops in Seattle.

Maybe we need a reminder to wake up and smell the java. *Not By Politics Alone: The Enduring Influence of the Christian Right*, by Sara Diamond Ph.D., reveals the relationship between right-wing politics and religion during the past two decades. More than a scoreboard of issues and votes, her book presents the rules of the game for winning political points through public piety. An authority on rightist movements in the U.S., Ms. Diamond gives us an evenhanded examination that should sit on the shelves of culture-watchers of all political persuasions.

The Christian Right, says Diamond, is both a political and a religious force that uses the common fears of society – fear of divorce, the endangerment of children, lawlessness, loneliness – to advance the success of the Republican party. In 1994, it enabled Republicans to take control of Congress and cripple Clinton's progressive policies while leading some Democrats to adopt conservative positions on crime and welfare. Its intent, however, is much larger than the triumph of one political faction over another.

Diamond argues that the Christian Right's goal is no less than the submission of America's culture to biblical law, a motive that infuses sterile electoral politics with fervent personal faith. "For believers," she writes, "it is about winning an external struggle between the forces of good and devil – if not this year, then maybe the next; if not through the ballot box, then by other means."

Good drama requires conflict and lively politics needs enemies – "forces of darkness" which can take the guise of any social or political affiliation the Right chooses. While the early Christian church avoided entanglement with Rome in favor of a higher Kingdom, the Religious Right openly contends for secular power that its will be done here and now. Paradoxically, a modern believer can be encouraged to suspect banks are satanic puppets and also apply for a Christian Coalition VISA card.

Its influence endures, says Diamond, because it is preorganized through churches and mobilized by 4,000 radio stations that advise patrons on personal problems while using those allegiances to urge political action against abortion, gay rights, and other pet targets. During the eighties, the "700 Club" blended propaganda from Reagan's Central American policies with personal accounts of prayer-inspired healing. Focus on the Family built a $100 million empire on homespun advice that also wins hearts and minds in what James Dobson calls the "culture wars of the 90s."

The drive to heal personal pain rarely strays far from political ends. In July 1996, the Christian Coalition organized a Racial Reconciliation Sunday, urging 100,000 churches to collect moneys for the rebuilding of vandalized black churches. Was this a demonstration of Ralph Reed's warning that, "We will no longer concede the minority community to the political left?" Recently the Christian Right has pitted blacks against gays, suggesting civil rights are a pie from which you can't take a slice without depriving others of their piece.

Sara Diamond's third book on the religious right leaves us with the sober understanding that fulfillment of that movement's mandate is not a conservative presidential candidate, but worldwide political obedience to one system of religious belief, beginning in the United States. CP

FESTIVAL OF LEARNING
A Learning Unlimited Inc. Program
A Community Celebration of Lifelong Learning

Sunday, 12 noon to 7 p.m., January 24
Monday, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., January 25

WORLD ARENA
COLORADO SPRINGS™
3185 Venetucci Blvd., Colorado Springs, CO

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT DAY
An Education to Employment Expo

Church-State Separation Advocate Speaks in Springs

Executive Director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, Barry Lynn, recently visited Colorado with a message of strength in the face of right-wing threats to First Amendment freedoms. Lynn spoke at an event hosted by a coalition of groups including Citizens Project. The following are excerpts from his rousing speech.

On the Christian Coalition's Annual Conference

I have survived another trip to the Christian Coalition's annual "Road to Victory" Conference. Once again, there seemed to be a contest going on among the speakers to determine which one could call for the elimination of the most government agencies in 20 minutes. Once again, after announcements of the fully nonpartisan nature of their activities, they declared their intention to get rid of specific Democratic senators including Patty Murray of Washington and Russell Feingold.

On the Christian Coalition's Game Plan for Taking Over the Nation

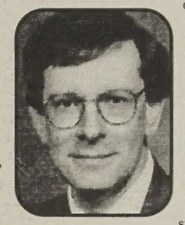
One year ago, Americans United obtained a tape in which Pat Robertson outlined his game plan for (quite literally) taking over the nation. This was the speech in which he made four crucial points: (1) the Christian Coalition should emulate Tammany Hall, as if he didn't know or care that it was the most corrupt political machine in American History; (2) he and the Coalition would choose the next Republican nominee for President; (3) since the Christian Coalition had elected the last few Congresses, Congress must work on the Robertson agenda; and (4) some of this would have to be done carefully because of the scrutiny of the IRS. In fact, he admitted that the first tax auditor of the Christian Coalition recommended they should not be given a tax exemption.

On the Christian Coalition's Intolerance of Other Religions

Here are a few of Pat Robertson's observations on people whose faith is different from his own. On Hindus: "What is Hinduism but devil worship, ultimately?" On Muslims: "To see Americans become followers of Islam is nothing short of insanity. Why would people in America want to embrace the religion of the slaves?" Last summer Robertson opined that the Catholic understanding of Holy Communion was like telling us "to be like cannibals."

Now if you are not yet offended, brother Robertson has little regard even for mainstream Protestants: "You say, 'You're supposed to be nice to the Episcopalians and the Presbyterians and the Methodists and this, that, and the other thing. Nonsense! I don't have to be nice to the spirit of the antichrist."

On the Christian Coalition's Minority Outreach



Minority Outreach would of course be easier to do if Robertson had not been the last major American religious leader to support apartheid in South Africa. It would also be useful if they could nudge people like Charlton Heston, the banquet speaker at their Road to Victory Conference, to perhaps avoid lies like "The only group you can discriminate against anymore is gun-carrying Caucasian males."

On Roberton's Pick for Presidential Candidate

Pat has gone pretty far in signaling his plan. He and his spouse Dede have each contributed $50,000 to the Spirit of America PAC of Missouri Senator John Ashcroft. Ashcroft was the featured speaker at Robertson's Regent University spring graduation and has made numerous appearances on the "700 Club."

On the Christian Coalition's Tax Problems

What Pat Robertson is really worried about, of course, is that the IRS has been sitting for 8 3/4 years on his application for tax exemption for the Christian Coalition. It has been operating as a provisional 501 (c4) organization. The group pays no taxes but donations are not tax deductible; also the "primary purpose" cannot be to engage in electoral activities. Frankly, almost all of their activities are partisan: the taxes they don't pay are essentially being subsidized by the rest of us: and it is about time for the IRS to do its duty and shut them down – forcing them to reform as a PAC and pay tens of millions in back taxes and penalties!

On Gay Rights

What if you're gay? The nicest thing the Right says is "we love the sinner, but hate the sin."

On June 8 Robertson excoriated Orlando, Florida for allowing gay-pride rainbow flags to be flown from city light polls. For this offense, combined with "Gay Days" weekend at Disney World, the televangelist said the city could be hit by tornadoes, earthquakes, terrorist attacks, and "possibly a meteor."

On the Use of Churches for Campaigning

Americans United for the Separation of Church and State have reported churches whose pastors have written letters on church stationery endorsing candidates, where a virtual Political Action Committee was being operated out of the church basement, and where churches were extensions of local party apparatus. Unfortunately, although the Democratic National Committee has now said it will no longer hold fund-raisers in religious institutions, the Republicans have not reciprocated, and the religious right still maintains that churches have an absolute constitutional right, unshared by any other group, to endorse and support candidates without any government regulation or scrutiny.

This year we have plans to report to the IRS all churches which distribute the voter's guides of the Christian Coalition. It is ethically wrong for churches to pass out this material; we've had one of the top tax attorneys in the country do a legal memorandum to that effect.

In Closing

Don Hodel, the Coalition's President, told a newspaper: "We have to be careful that we don't become so mainstream that our constituency leaves us." Don't worry, Don. So long as Pat Robertson is in charge, you have nothing to worry about!!

We have truth and the Constitution on our side. The only way we lose for sure is if we leave the playing field – or watch the election results all day on CNN and don't go to the polls to affect those results.

It's time we tap into that wellspring of commonsense in the American people that regularly resists extremist solutions. But first, we have to expose just how bizarre the ultimate goals of the religious right really are, and urge would-be followers not to take even the first step until they know the first destination.

What is ultimately at stake is Constitutional democracy itself. People with a theocratic agenda – who want America to be run along narrow sectarian religious lines – should be viewed as neither patriots nor moral leaders. They are an affront to what has made America great, a land where religious liberty is the norm and real moral choice the goal.

Newsbriefs

American Voters Reject Religious Right Extremism

In the November elections, those candidates across the country aligned with the religious right suffered losses. Despite the Christian Coalition's millions of dollars in election spending, and promotion of Christian voter turnout, many of the candidates who drew heavy support from religious right groups lost competitive races.

Americans United Executive Director Barry Lynn cited Alabama Gov. Fob James as a prime example. Lynn said, "Fob is the personification of the Religious Right agenda. He made school prayer and the Ten Commandments the chief planks in his platform. Yet even conservative Alabama voters refused to say Amen." In contrast, GOP Candidates like Jeb Bush in Florida or Tom Ridge in Pennsylvania, chose a more moderate platform and were victorious.

Supreme Court Refuses to Hear Case on Wisconsin Tax-Supported Private School Vouchers

The Supreme court refused (8-1) on November 9 to hear a challenge to Wisconsin's tax-supported private-school vouchers. The voucher program that was upheld will enable thousands of children to attend private schools, the majority of which are religious, with public tax money. Milwaukee and Cleveland are the only U.S. cities that allow this type of vouchers, although voucher programs have been proposed in at least 20 state legislatures across the country.

Colorado voters rejected a voucher for a tuition tax credit November 3rd, but a lawsuit demanding public funds for private schools is still pending in the Colorado Court of Appeals. About 3,500 Denver parents sued the Denver public schools to try to force the district to pay for their children to leave public schools and attend private schools. The Supreme Court set no national precedent in the Milwaukee case, but the court's go-ahead could encourage similar programs in other states. CP

Quote of Note

"Heaven help the God-fearing, law-abiding Caucasian middle class – Protestant or even worse evangelical Christian, Midwest or Southern or even worse rural, apparently straight or even worse admitted [heterosexual], gun-owning or even worse NRA card-carrying average working stiff, or even worst of all, male working stiff. Because not only don't you count, you're a downright obstacle to social progress."

– Charlton Heston on American culture's alleged disdain for traditional values at the Christian Coalition's annual conference .

A Crime Against Humanity

by Hugh B. Price – President, National Urban League

Matthew Shepard, an undergraduate at the University of Wyoming in Laramie, was different.

For one thing, although born in Wyoming, he had lived abroad with his parents and spoke Arabic and German.

But that's not what made him "different" to the men who brutally tortured and murdered him.

What made him different to them was that he was gay – moreover, he was a homosexual who refused to conceal his sexual identity.

To his killers, both those facts made him a target for their twisted, venomous rage. They lured him outside a campus-area bar, kidnapped him, and drove him to an isolated rural location. There they pistol-whipped him, fracturing his skull, and tied him to a fence, where he hung for 18 hours before a passer-by found him and called the police.

Matthew Shepard was slain not because his killers wanted to rob him. He died because they wanted to punish him for being a homosexual.

He was slain because he was different, and his difference made all the difference to his murderers.

It enabled them to declare *him not human, and, therefore,* to act as men without scruples, without a shred of decency to their tattered souls; as savages. By declaring Matthew Shepard not human, his killers could slip out of their own humanity in order to act out their murderous rage.

This is the essence of the lynching frenzy. It is essential to the commission of crimes against humanity.

African Americans are well acquainted with this kind of horrific behavior – murder motivated by a bigotry that often includes a strong element of a perverse psychosexual desire.

It was the foundation of the base practice of lynching, which took the lives of so many black men, women, and children down through the centuries of America's existence, leaving a bloody stain that has yet to fade.

Lynching was not just a murderous way to impose and maintain an oppressive social control over the lives of black people. It was an act of exorcism, a compulsive attempt on the part of the lynchers to let loose the demons that were haunting them.

But, unfortunately, one need not recall the reign of terror African Americans endured in the American South, or the near-destruction of Native American peoples in the American West, or the Nazis' attempt to destroy European Jewry during the 1930s and 1940s, to find the unbearably sad comparisons to this crime.

There is "enough material" we can draw on from the present: from such foreign territory as Rwanda; from Indonesia, where ethnic Chinese Indonesians suffered terribly during that country's recent upheavals; from Kosovo and other "killing fields" in the Balkans; and from here in America, with the so-called "skinhead murders" in Denver and the awful murder of James Byrd Jr., an African American, in Jasper, Texas last June [Byrd was dragged behind a car to his death by white supremacists.] These examples showed – again – that these kind of depraved human beings exist everywhere.

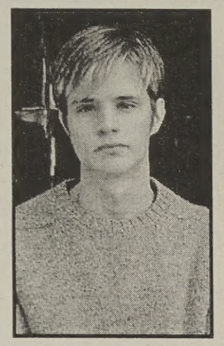
Two men have been arrested and charged with Matthew Shepard's murder. If they are guilty, then by their actions they have forfeited their right to ever again be free.

Their imprisonment, no matter how deserved, will not restore the life of this young man.

But the larger community of human beings does have a responsibility to take action beyond punishing those who committed this evil deed.

The Congress should, as President Clinton has said, amend the current federal law against hate crimes to make Federal offenses of crimes based on sex, disability, and sexual orientation, as well as race, color, religion, and national origin. And the Wyoming state legislature should join the 21 states which also have such laws on their books.

Hate-crime laws do not give some groups "special rights," nor do they curtail freedom of thought or speech.



Matthew Shepard

They do penalize actions that spring from a particular attitude. They do warn bigots that society has declared that crimes motivated by prejudice are unacceptable and will bring a punishment tailored to the crime.

Beyond that, we in the larger American community must work to make the ties of tolerance among us stronger.

For how to do that, perhaps we can look to Jasper, Texas, the town where James Byrd Jr. was slain.

At the time the world's spotlight focused on them, its citizens said that heinous act did not represent life there.

Well, now, according to a recent *Wall Street Journal* story, they're proving it. In large ways and small, Jasper's citizens are grappling with its racial past and, more importantly, its present and future. They're trying to close the distance that *difference* has created among them.

In doing so, they invite us to move beyond the mere – and often empty – expression of tolerance to an honest acceptance that others who are different have as much right to inhabit the earth as we do.

Committing ourselves to that goal will enable us to make sense out of the senseless death of Matthew Shepard. CP

The Power of Public Piety

A book review by Rebekah Shardy

Living in Colorado Springs, home to dozens of evangelical groups, it's easy to turn a blind eye to the Christian Right, since its presence here is as startling as coffee shops in Seattle.

Maybe we need a reminder to wake up and smell the java. *Not By Politics Alone: The Enduring Influence of the Christian Right,* by Sara Diamond Ph.D., reveals the relationship between right-wing politics and religion during the past two decades. More than a scoreboard of issues and votes, her book presents the rules of the game for winning political points through public piety. An authority on rightist movements in the U.S., Ms. Diamond gives us an evenhanded examination that should sit on the shelves of culture-watchers of all political persuasions.

The Christian Right, says Diamond, is both a political and a religious force that uses the common fears of society – fear of divorce, the endangerment of children, lawlessness, loneliness – to advance the success of the Republican party. In 1994, it enabled Republicans to take control of Congress and cripple Clinton's progressive policies while leading some Democrats to adopt conservative positions on crime and welfare. Its intent, however, is much larger than the triumph of one political faction over another.

Diamond argues that the Christian Right's goal is no less than the submission of America's culture to biblical law, a motive that infuses sterile electoral politics with fervent personal faith. "For believers," she writes, "it is about winning an external struggle between the forces of good and devil – if not this year, then maybe the next; if not through the ballot box, then by other means."

Good drama requires conflict and lively politics needs enemies – "forces of darkness" which can take the guise of any social or political affiliation the Right chooses. While the early Christian church avoided entanglement with Rome in favor of a higher Kingdom, the Religious Right openly contends for secular power that its will be done here and now. Paradoxically, a modern believer can be encouraged to suspect banks are satanic puppets and also apply for a Christian Coalition VISA card.

Its influence endures, says Diamond, because it is preorganized through churches and mobilized by 4,000 radio stations that advise patrons on personal problems while using those allegiances to urge political action against abortion, gay rights, and other pet targets. During the eighties, the "700 Club" blended propaganda from Reagan's Central American policies with personal accounts of prayer-inspired healing. Focus on the Family built a $100 million empire on homespun advice that also wins hearts and minds in what James Dobson calls the "culture wars of the 90s."

The drive to heal personal pain rarely strays far from political ends. In July 1996, the Christian Coalition organized a Racial Reconciliation Sunday, urging 100,000 churches to collect moneys for the rebuilding of vandalized black churches. Was this a demonstration of Ralph Reed's warning that, "We will no longer concede the minority community to the political left?" Recently the Christian Right has pitted blacks against gays, suggesting civil rights are a pie from which you can't take a slice without depriving others of their piece.

Sara Diamond's third book on the religious right leaves us with the sober understanding that fulfillment of that movement's mandate is not a conservative presidential candidate, but worldwide political obedience to one system of religious belief, beginning in the United States. CP

FESTIVAL OF LEARNING
A Learning Unlimited Inc. Program
A Community Celebration of Lifelong Learning
Sunday, 12 noon to 7 p.m., January 24
Monday, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., January 25
WORLD ARENA
COLORADO SPRINGS
3185 Venetucci Blvd., Colorado Springs, CO
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT DAY
An Education to Employment Expo

Church-State Separation Advocate Speaks in Springs

Executive Director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, Barry Lynn, recently visited Colorado with a message of strength in the face of right-wing threats to First Amendment freedoms. Lynn spoke at an event hosted by a coalition of groups including Citizens Project. The following are excerpts from his rousing speech.

On the Christian Coalition's Annual Conference

I have survived another trip to the Christian Coalition's annual "Road to Victory" Conference. Once again, there seemed to be a contest going on among the speakers to determine which one could call for the elimination of the most government agencies in 20 minutes. Once again, after announcements of the fully nonpartisan nature of their activities, they declared their intention to get rid of specific Democratic senators including Patty Murray of Washington and Russell Feingold.

On the Christian Coalition's Game Plan for Taking Over the Nation

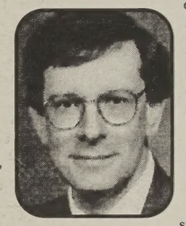
One year ago, Americans United obtained a tape in which Pat Robertson outlined his game plan for (quite literally) taking over the nation. This was the speech in which he made four crucial points: (1) the Christian Coalition should emulate Tammany Hall, as if he didn't know or care that it was the most corrupt political machine in American History; (2) he and the Coalition would choose the next Republican nominee for President; (3) since the Christian Coalition had elected the last few Congresses, Congress must work on the Robertson agenda; and (4) some of this would have to be done carefully because of the scrutiny of the IRS. In fact, he admitted that the first tax auditor of the Christian Coalition recommended they should not be given a tax exemption.

On the Christian Coalition's Intolerance of Other Religions

Here are a few of Pat Robertson's observations on people whose faith is different from his own. On Hindus: "What is Hinduism but devil worship, ultimately?" On Muslims: "To see Americans become followers of Islam is nothing short of insanity. Why would people in America want to embrace the religion of the slaves?" Last summer Robertson opined that the Catholic understanding of Holy Communion was like telling us "to be like cannibals."

Now if you are not yet offended, brother Robertson has little regard even for mainstream Protestants: "You say, 'You're supposed to be nice to the Episcopalians and the Presbyterians and the Methodists and this, that, and the other thing. Nonsense! I don't have to be nice to the spirit of the antichrist."

On the Christian Coalition's Minority Outreach



Minority Outreach would of course be easier to do if Robertson had not been the last major American religious leader to support apartheid in South Africa. It would also be useful if they could nudge people like Charlton Heston, the banquet speaker at their Road to Victory Conference, to perhaps avoid lies like "The only group you can discriminate against anymore is gun-carrying Caucasian males."

On Roberton's Pick for Presidential Candidate

Pat has gone pretty far in signaling his plan. He and his spouse Dede have each contributed $50,000 to the Spirit of America PAC of Missouri Senator John Ashcroft. Ashcroft was the featured speaker at Robertson's Regent University spring graduation and has made numerous appearances on the "700 Club."

On the Christian Coalition's Tax Problems

What Pat Robertson is really worried about, of course, is that the IRS has been sitting for 8 3/4 years on his application for tax exemption for the Christian Coalition. It has been operating as a provisional 501 (c4) organization. The group pays no taxes but donations are not tax deductible; also the "primary purpose" cannot be to engage in electoral activities. Frankly, almost all of their activities are partisan: the taxes they don't pay are essentially being subsidized by the rest of us: and it is about time for the IRS to do its duty and shut them down – forcing them to reform as a PAC and pay tens of millions in back taxes and penalties!

On Gay Rights

What if you're gay? The nicest thing the Right says is "we love the sinner, but hate the sin."

On June 8 Robertson excoriated Orlando, Florida for allowing gay-pride rainbow flags to be flown from city light polls. For this offense, combined with "Gay Days" weekend at Disney World, the televangelist said the city could be hit by tornadoes, earthquakes, terrorist attacks, and "possibly a meteor."

On the Use of Churches for Campaigning

Americans United for the Separation of Church and State have reported churches whose pastors have written letters on church stationery endorsing candidates, where a virtual Political Action Committee was being operated out of the church basement, and where churches were extensions of local party apparatus. Unfortunately, although the Democratic National Committee has now said it will no longer hold fund-raisers in religious institutions, the Republicans have not reciprocated, and the religious right still maintains that churches have an absolute constitutional right, unshared by any other group, to endorse and support candidates without any government regulation or scrutiny.

This year we have plans to report to the IRS all churches which distribute the voter's guides of the Christian Coalition. It is ethically wrong for churches to pass out this material; we've had one of the top tax attorneys in the country do a legal memorandum to that effect.

In Closing

Don Hodel, the Coalition's President, told a newspaper: "We have to be careful that we don't become so mainstream that our constituency leaves us." Don't worry, Don. So long as Pat Robertson is in charge, you have nothing to worry about!!

We have truth and the Constitution on our side. The only way we lose for sure is if we leave the playing field – or watch the election results all day on CNN and don't go to the polls to affect those results.

It's time we tap into that wellspring of commonsense in the American people that regularly resists extremist solutions. But first, we have to expose just how bizarre the ultimate goals of the religious right really are, and urge would-be followers not to take even the first step until they know the first destination.

What is ultimately at stake is Constitutional democracy itself. People with a theocratic agenda – who want America to be run along narrow sectarian religious lines – should be viewed as neither patriots nor moral leaders. They are an affront to what has made America great, a land where religious liberty is the norm and real moral choice the goal.

Newsbriefs

American Voters Reject Religious Right Extremism

In the November elections, those candidates across the country aligned with the religious right suffered losses. Despite the Christian Coalition's millions of dollars in election spending, and promotion of Christian voter turnout, many of the candidates who drew heavy support from religious right groups lost competitive races.

Americans United Executive Director Barry Lynn cited Alabama Gov. Fob James as a prime example. Lynn said, "Fob is the personification of the Religious Right agenda. He made school prayer and the Ten Commandments the chief planks in his platform. Yet even conservative Alabama voters refused to say Amen." In contrast, GOP Candidates like Jeb Bush in Florida or Tom Ridge in Pennsylvania, chose a more moderate platform and were victorious.

Supreme Court Refuses to Hear Case on Wisconsin Tax-Supported Private School Vouchers

The Supreme court refused (8-1) on November 9 to hear a challenge to Wisconsin's tax-supported private-school vouchers. The voucher program that was upheld will enable thousands of children to attend private schools, the majority of which are religious, with public tax money. Milwaukee and Cleveland are the only U.S. cities that allow this type of vouchers, although voucher programs have been proposed in at least 20 state legislatures across the country.

Colorado voters rejected a voucher for a tuition tax credit November 3rd, but a lawsuit demanding public funds for private schools is still pending in the Colorado Court of Appeals. About 3,500 Denver parents sued the Denver public schools to try to force the district to pay for their children to leave public schools and attend private schools. The Supreme Court set no national precedent in the Milwaukee case, but the court's go-ahead could encourage similar programs in other states. CP

Quote of Note

"Heaven help the God-fearing, law-abiding Caucasian middle class – Protestant or even worse evangelical Christian, Midwest or Southern or even worse rural, apparently straight or even worse admitted [heterosexual], gun-owning or even worse NRA card-carrying average working stiff, or even worst of all, male working stiff. Because not only don't you count, you're a downright obstacle to social progress."

– Charlton Heston on American culture's alleged disdain for traditional values at the Christian Coalition's annual conference .

Separation of School and State Conference in Springs

by Megan Day

In an effort to attract the religious right to their cause, the Separation of School and State brought their message of abolishing all public education to Colorado Springs. Their fourth annual conference, held at the Antlers Hotel November 12-14, focused on the leading question: "Do 'Public Schools' Undermine Religious Beliefs So Much That You Should Remove Your Children?"

While conference participants came from many different backgrounds, they all found common ground in their abhorrence of public schools. Public schools were most certainly the scapegoat of the conference æ blamed for nearly every societal problem.

Sending your child to public school was equated with "standing by and watching your daughter raped or your son molested." Panelist Ron Nash summarized the answer to the conference question stating, "The people running public schools have an anti-Christian, anti-Muslim, anti-Jewish world view .. They are full of people who have the wrong world view."

The demise of public schools would bring about a new Great Awakening, according to conference organizer Marshall Fritz. He reflected a widely-held view at the conference that separating students with different "worldviews" would benefit them and their parents. "When students attend schools that reflect their worldview, their parents will only meet other parents with the same worldview. These kinds of friendships will be more affirmative."

Conference Highlights

Colorado for Family Values Executive Director, Paul Jessen sat on a panel entitled: "Why Promoters of Sex-Ed Scorn Chastity and Promote Safe-Sin. Jessen explained how the "sexed" curriculum was part of "an organized conspiracy to control this country under a benign dictatorship."

"They [the public schools] start in kindergarten by telling children the names their parents used for their private parts are all wrong and thus undermining the parent's authority. In 1st and 2nd grade they show children nude models and diagrams to show you how to have intercourse. In 4th grade they teach children how to masturbate alone and then encourage them to do it in groups. They also teach that homosexuality and abortion are options at this age. In middle school they start showing pornography ... *This is all part of an effort to make little socialists of little boys and girls so they don't learn how to read so that we can control them."* CP

"Democracy is an evil form of government"
– Audience member

Assistant Director Needed

Purpose:

- To assist in directing programs, fundraising, volunteer management, and administration.

Responsibilities:

- Organize community events
- Recruiting and coordinating volunteers
- Establish and maintain familiarity with issues related to Citizens Project's mission
- Represent Citizens Project to other organizations, the media, prospective donors, & the general public.
- Organize & coordinate various fundraising efforts, including but not limited to: direct mail, major donors, events, & grants.

Qualifications:

- Commitment to the Citizens Project mission and vision
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Computer literacy
- Experience with project oversight, media and/or public relations, fundraising and volunteer management

Send resume and cover letter to:
Megan Day
Citizens Project P.O. Box 2085
Colorado Springs, CO 80901

Celebrate Diversity!

Citizens Project • Box 2085 • Colorado Springs, Colorado 80901 • 719-520-9899

You can make a difference

JOIN
Citizens Project

Your voice for tolerance in the Pikes Peak region.

Citizens Project ...

- Organizes campaigns, workshops, and events
- Monitors and informs on legislative and other issues
- Reports on news and views in *Freedom Watch*
- Sponsors candidate surveys and forums

... and more

☐ Yes, I'd like to join Citizens Project! Enclosed is my membership contribution of $25 or more.

All new member contributions will be matched by the Gay and Lesbian Fund for Colorado

☐ I'm already a member, but I'm ready to do more! Enclosed is my contribution of:

☐ $25 ☐ $50 ☐ $75 ☐ $120 ☐ Other: $_____

Name_____

Address_____
Street

_____
City State Zip

Phone (___) ___ – (___) ___ –
Work Home

Please return to:
Citizens Project
Box 2085
Colo. Spgs., CO 80901

Our Mission: Citizens Project is a grassroots organization in the Pikes Peak region dedicated to upholding the traditional American values of pluralism, freedom of religion, and separation of church and state.

Citizens Project

P.O. Box 2085
Colorado Springs,
Colorado 80901

Phone: (719) 520-9899
Fax: (719) 520-0118
WWW: citproj.ppages.com

Advisory Council

Buck Blessing, Christine Beserra, Carolyn & Peet Heuberger, Mary Ellen McNally, Jerome Page, Katherine Pease, Joanne Peterson, Dave Porter, Dr. James Sauls, Jim Alice Scott, Howard Sheldon, Doug Triggs

Editorial Committee

Michael Dyer, Sharon Friedman, Richard Van Scotter, Ken Burrows, Mike Miles, Vince Puzick

Board of Directors

Richard Conway Chair, Jody Alyn, Peg Bacon, Pastor Jesse Brown, Jr., Lynda Dickson, Amy Divine, Sharon Friedman, Mike Miles, Richard Van Scotter, Richard Skorman, Greg Walta, Marjory Webster

Director

Megan Day
http://citproj.ppages.com

An affiliate of Community Shares.
***Freedom Watch* is a monthly publication of Citizens Project.**
©1998, Citizens Project. All rights reserved.

Thanks to 3RI Web- and Copy-editing!

Freedom Watch appreciates the support of the following foundations:

CHINOOK FUND

GAY AND LESBIAN FUND FOR COLORADO